

U.S. History 1865 to the present (History 202-02)
Capers 405 MWF, 11-11:50am
Spring 2012

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Hours: MW: 2-4pm and by appt.

The Course

Over the next sixteen weeks, we will retrace the steps of those who have shaped American history and culture since the Civil War. Along the way we will meet up with freedmen and Klansmen, Robber Barons and Bonus Marchers, lintheads and Pinkertons, peasants, punks, and presidents. We will read about cheerful robots and freedom riders. We will explore consumerism and conservatism, Black Codes, and Red Scares. We will read fiction and journalism and political speeches. We will listen to top forty hits and secret tapes, and we will watch movies.

How do we weave such a group of diverse Americans, and such complicated and contradictory themes together into a manageable and coherent narrative? Any effort to do so is artificial and flawed, but by forging ahead it is possible to reach deeper insights into the American character. We can at least approach historical truths.

This course treats U.S. history as an ideological arena – a site in which Americans of all races, classes, and regions are bound by their commitment to notions of freedom and liberty. Because no two Americans define those ideas in the same way things get interesting. This is where struggle takes place and history is made.

In particular, we will pay attention to three aspects of Americans' ideas about freedom and liberty: 1. Are there dominant notions of freedom and liberty? From where do they emerge historically? How have immigrants, African Americans, women, and working people struggled to redefine freedom and liberty? 2. How have various notions of freedom squared with American realities? During the Gilded Age? The Great Depression? The 1970s? 3. What bearing do local events have on national and international events and vice versa? To what degree, for instance, is American freedom dependent on the exercise of imperial power? As much as possible, we will look at national events and trends from a regional and local perspective – The South, Charleston, and The Citadel.

As we move through the course – and across time – we will reflect on American freedom and liberty in relation to these three storylines: its contested meanings; its ideal vs. its reality; and the interconnectedness of local, national, and international events.

Class format

Most classes will feature some combination of lecture and discussion. Lectures are meant to complement the main themes of the readings, explain particular episodes in detail, and provide course continuity. You will be able to follow the lecture material much more effectively if you have already read the relevant textbook assignment.

The content and structure of the discussions will vary: some will reinforce material from the lectures and readings; others will allow us to explore particular events and themes in greater detail; and still others are designed to teach you how to extract evidence from historical materials and analyze their meanings.

Grading

Final grades will be calculated as follows: Three equally weighted exams will account for 60%; a final project/paper 20%; attendance and participation, group projects, as well as a few quizzes and additional writing assignments 20%.

The three exams will include a combination of multiple choice questions, short answers, and an essay. The final research paper/project (4-7pp.) will require you to visit a local cemetery, find a gravestone, and exhume as much historical information as you can on a deceased city resident. You will then draw on primary historical documents and course materials to place their lives in a larger historical context.

I expect you to attend each class, arrive on time, complete the assigned reading, and bring your copies of that day's readings with you. You should always come to class prepared to participate in discussion. To get the highest participation grade you'll have to do more than just skim over the readings: you should also think carefully about what the author is saying, draw connections between different readings, compare readings to what you know from other sources, make notes, and come to class armed with questions or discussion points. You will also be asked to prepare at least two short group presentations based on a popular film related to the time period under discussion.

I may additionally give occasional short, multiple choice quizzes. These will usually be unannounced and are meant to encourage you to keep up with the readings. Lastly, I'll assign a handful of short writing assignments that are ungraded, but required.

Students are expected to adhere to the Honor Code in all their written work. I have no tolerance for plagiarism, which means the intentional or unintentional use of the ideas and/or words of other authors without crediting them appropriately. Plagiarized work will result in a failing grade for the course, and be reported as an honor violation.

Readings

Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, Volume Two, Second or Third Edition.
Some supplementary readings may be sent to you via email.

Calendar

Week	Topic	Reading/ Assignment
Jan. 11-13	Introductions/When was America?	
Jan. 18-20	Reconstruction	Chapter 15
Jan. 23-27	Gilded Age	Chapter 16
Jan. 30-Feb. 3	The Populist Moment	Chapter 17
Feb. 6-10	The Progressive Era	Chapter 18, exam 1
Feb. 13-17	World War I	Chapter 19
Feb. 20-24	Roaring Twenties	Chapter 20
Feb. 27-March 2	The New Deal	Chapter 21
March 5-9	World War II	Chapter 22
March 12-16	The Cold War	Chapter 23, exam 2
March 19-23	Abundance and Fear	Chapter 24
March 26-30	Spring Break	Spring Break
April 2-6	1960s	Chapter 25
April 9-13	Conservative Triumph	Chapter 26
April 16-20	Globalization	Chapter 27, exam 3
April 23	Recent America	Chapter 28
April 28	FINAL PAPERS DUE	